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DAYCARE IN ALBERTA:

A REVIEW, WITH NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

by

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1. EXPERIENCING DAYCARE IN ALBERTA: THE GOOD AND THE BAD

Alberta has the potential and the promise of a first-class child care system. It could be the best in Canada. Yet first-class day care centres coexist in the same city with ones which should not, in our judgement continue to operate. Parents looking for good child care have little help in making sound judgements from the province's Day Care Branch and its licencing inspectors.

Paradoxically, Alberta spends almost two and a half times more per child on child care services than the average for all other provinces and territories. But profit-making, private enterprise day care centres get large operating subsidies with no strings attached. There is no requirement that any member of the staff of a child care centre have any training at all. Licencing officers have now abandoned any attempt to enforce regulations on group size.

Reductions in the number of personnel who work in day care support and inspection have been justified by the provincial government on the grounds of "economy". Yet at the same time that child care support services have been cut back and the quality of services has deteriorated, spending on child welfare services has mushroomed, to reach the staggering figure of over one billion dollars in 1985-86. Only $50 million was spent on day care by the province.

The failure of the province's licencing and inspection system for child care services also reflects a private enterprise philosophy in government which assumes that although generous government subsidies are given to the operators of profit-making child care centres, controls on their operations should be minimal.

When the interests of children come up against the demands of private enterprise, it seems that in Alberta's child care system, private enterprise wins the day.

We introduce this overview of daycare policy and practice in Alberta with a personal account of a mother of twins whose experience of daycare illustrates the best and the worst aspects of child care for young children in the province. This case study demonstrates dramatically the anguish and dilemma of a parent in finding good daycare.

Personal Account of a Mother With Two Children in Daycare in Calgary

When my twins were 18 months, I began to look for a day care to look after them for a few days a week. I didn't know anything about day care, a situation which I regret in hind-sight. The first place I had them was a private centre. I at least knew that the non-profit centres were considered better by most parents and I understood they were better staffed and did more interesting things with kids, I had heard, but the one in my area had a wailing list that was over one year, and absolutely no spaces whenever I checked over the next 1½ years.

The center I chose was very near where I lived, which now that I think back, was all I did when selecting a place for my children - look for one that was near. I went to check the place out beforehand and tried to look for what was good for children, but I was really uninformed and didn't know what that was. The sales pitch listed all the advantages. The woman who owned the place pointed out with pride that they had a registered nurse on the place, so I supposed that was good. She also said they would toilet train my children if I wanted, and I thought at the time that it was really good for them to want to help with the training. I didn't know enough to ask just how they would train them, what method they would use or what their philosophy was.

What seemed important to me was that the woman who ran the room for the little ones was an older, nice woman who seemed to treat children well. That room seemed clean - the other rooms were so-so. I appreciated the fact that even though they were pretty full, they would squeeze my two in, because they were to be part-time. Looking back, I think the actual fact was they they slipped in my two into an already crowded centre for the money it would bring them and made it appear that overcrowding is a favour to parents who are faced with the problems of crowded waiting lists.

I got to know the lady who looked after the younger kids. She looked after about 20-25 kids by herself, with no help except for lunch. Down the hall were a line-up of potty chairs, small plastic ones, against the wall, where she would make the various kids, in need of training sit. Mine were 18 months and not ready yet, but I thought the exposure to kids who were training or already trained might stimulate interest in them. She would tell me how tired she got with all those kids. A few of them were really a problem to handle and were old enough to go into the next room with the kids their age, but the owner wouldn't move them.

When I came to pick them up, the older woman was gone (she started really early I guess, so by 5:00 or 5:30 p.m. when I came, she was gone). At that point of the day, my kids were in the big room with all the other kids. I thought, how nice, they get to interact with the older kids. Now I realize that they didn't want to pay for extra staff for each room, so they just threw them all together and had a few women watch them all.

Finally, I noticed things that I didn't think were right. The kids were rather wild at the end of the day when they were not properly supervised, and I would see fights and children running around shouting. My kids were always at a small table, colouring with old, broken crayons in well-used colouring books. That table was a place that one woman was always at, like a station I suppose, and my kids hung around there, probably for protection. I didn't realize that then. I thought they just liked colouring. I began to notice that the centre was also not very well-equipped. The toys were old

and broken and the only equipment I ever saw that looked like it cost actual money was a large castle in the yard outside. They didn't seem to have much structure for the kids and seldom tried new things, but the children sure knew how to colour. My children seemed to adjust not too badly. They liked the older woman, who was so over-worked and tired all the time. They were just little anyway, and probably couldn't say much to me about it.

However, after about 6 months, my little boy began to not want to go. I tried to find out what was wrong from him and gradually I began to realize he was trying to tell me something about not liking the lady there. I knew he liked the woman who was usually there so I was confused, but finally realized he was telling me about the one who watched them at the end of the day or filled in when the regular woman was sick. I noticed that he wouldn't go anywhere near her and didn't hang around the colouring table anymore. After a while he started to say "hit" all the time and I finally figured out he wasn't talking about the kids but that he was afraid of the woman because she hit him.

I asked the older woman, who was the regular worker and she was non-commital and said she didn't hit the children and I should ask the woman in question. I did and she assured me that she never hit the kids. I wondered if I wasn't understanding him or something, because it was unbelievable to me that a place in the business of caring for children would ever abuse them. After watching and talking to him and noticing no change in his behaviour, I began to suspect I was being lied to. I confronted the owner, who said no one hits the kids, but she

was a little sheepish, and I didn't believe her. By this time, if the woman in question approached my son, he would run to me and say "lady hit" and cower if she came any nearer. I didn't think that was normal at all, and again asked her why he was so afraid of her and what she had done. She denied everything and avoided me when I came.

I was upset, and decided to withdraw my children, but it took about another month, before I could find a centre that would take them. I don't believe he was hit again, because I was wise to them, but he wasn't very happy there and kept saying "lady hit" over and over and did not want to go there.

I looked at the centre then with a little more clarity and realized that there were an awful lot of children, it was disorganized, not very clean, the owner did not invest in any supplies or toys for the children (a lot of what they had I was told, was donations from parents), and they didn't care about who they hired. I was glad I hadn't asked my children be started with toilet training.

By now, I was beginning to know what to look for and found a smaller centre, in the half-basement of an apartment building. The owner, I was told by friends, was just breaking even, because she put so much back into the centre. The yard space though, was small and there was only one small swing set in it. They didn't go out there much, I was told, but took the kids for walks. The woman who ran it seemed friendly, and she seemed to know a lot about child development.

This centre seemed well-equipped, with a water table, sand table, dress up and all sorts of other things, but the room was very small. My son, especially, needed to run more and get out of that dark room and be outside, especially in the summer. They did go for walks, and that was the first time I realized that they should get outside and do things. The other place never took the children out at all.

The kids seemed pretty happy and the staff, though very young it seemed, were a little more enthusiastic and not quite so tired. A friend of mine at work had mentioned that her daughter was fed potatoes with gravy every lunch (hot lunch) - and that was all, so I knew to check into nutrition. They gave them soup and a sandwich most days and a snack once a day of fruit or crackers.

Sometimes, with the limited space, they had a time keeping the children in line and the only place they had to put them was on a chair in the kitchen in the corner. Sometimes, they would turn out the light so the child sat in the dark. A friend later told me she pulled her child out of this particular place because when she happened to come back for

something she forgot she could see her child sitting in the darkened kitchen crying because she was being punished for getting upset when they took her blanket away from her. They never did that to my children and that is fortunate, since they had a fear of the dark as do most children that age.

Their major problem I think, was an inadequate facility. The room itself was too small. Often it was too hot because it was too close to the furnace room. It had a damp, dank smell to it and the air was not fresh. They were always wrestling with some equipment that wouldn't quite fit and leave room for the kids to play and after about 6 months, I really didn't want my children to continue going there. They were older too and sometimes complained that there wasn't any room to play. When I brought them home, they would stay out in the yard as long as possible.

I was working more part-time now and kept on phoning to check the non-profit centre, but the waiting list was still high. Finally, they did call me and I went to see the facility.

I wanted my children there right away. They had large rooms, and all kinds of equipment. It looked bright and cheery. All the children looked busy doing their own little things, and the out of bounds behaviour I always saw in private centres was missing here. Often the kids I had seen before seemed listless, or they fought and ran around too much with nothing to do.

I filled out an extensive questionnaire and forms, where they wanted to know all sorts of things about the children. I had never been asked at the other centres, though I always told them what I thought they should know that day about the kids. No one ever asked me though, I had to tell them. Here they wanted to know fears, likes, special words for things, whether the child was outgoing or quiet, special problems or concerns; in short, everything someone should know before working with a child.

I really felt badly that I had been so ignorant. I don't know to this day what other sort of things the for-profit centres might have done to the kids. I still wonder. I didn't know you needed trained people. I assumed at the for-profit centres, that the women were trained and qualified. I realize now that they hired anyone off the street. One woman, the owner of the smaller centre made me realize that when she said she had early childhood training, and so did one of her girls, like it was something unusual, to be proud of. That means that the others there probably didn't have a clue. With all the lack of training and overwork of staff in the for-profit centres, I feel sorry for the people who work in them, under paid and abused, but primarily even though I think of that tired older woman with those monsters, I feel much more concerned about the children.

What I thought was important and my appalling ignorance really bothers me. What good is a registered nurse? That's broken bones and injury, isn't it, not child care and behaviour. And who cares if they toiled train your child. They probably use a lot of punishment or whatever their parents used on them, not approved modern methods. They are not trained and they do not know what they are doing. At least, if I make a mistake and do something to the kids I shouldn't, I'm the mother and I love them and probably they will forgive my stupidity, but being mistreated by strangers must be very terrifying for a child.

All those people, off the street, working for minimum wage knowing nothing about what children need, working too long and too hard, with too many children in inadequate facilities, really frightens me. I am afraid for the children raised like that.

The non-profit centre was totally different from all the other centres. I toured 5-6 for-profit centres in my search for a good place, and the non-profit centre stood out like a sore thumb. They had hot meals, chicken, roasts, chops, real porridge, fruit, milk for snacks and a nutrition program. The child-staff was much smaller and there were two girls working with them, not just one.

The workers would tell me about the children and their reactions to different experiences and let me know what trouble they had gotten into, and didn't just tell me everything was fine all the time. They let me know about special programs they were doing, did preparation and made things for the kids. Equipment was rotated between rooms so the

children didn't get bored and they went on bused field trips. The only thing I didn't like was that they wouldn't take part-time and they wouldn't take untrained, children. Fortunately, my kids were trained by then. I would rather have kept them home when I was not working.

My kids were there for two years, and I was constantly amazed at how good a place it was. They took the kids on buses to the zoo. Up until then my kids had gone for walks only, and then only rarely. They had a gym built in one of the rooms. Everyone had to be trained to work there and they seemed confident with the children. Other than bad days, they seemed to like the kids and what they were doing. I think happy people working with kids can do so much more for them and the atmosphere is so much more positive. I saw so many tired people in the private centres, frustrated and annoyed at the children...

To date, my views are that no one should ever put their child in any day care in Alberta, whether for-profit or non-profit, until someone establishes good centres. I always advise women to look for a good home to put their kids in rather than institutionalize them in the lousy system Alberta has. I hear what other provinces have and it make me angry.

Here, in a single case history, virtually all of the problems of daycare in Alberta are summarized. These include the lack of information available on how to assess and choose good daycare; the long wait for access to a high quality, non-profit centre; and the poor quality standards which prevail in some of Alberta's daycares, linked to weaknesses of inspection and licensing, and the failure to require that any worker should be trained.

In Alberta 70 percent of daycares in Alberta have some kind of "profit" basis, and a major question to be addressed in this chapter is the degree to which government involvement in programs of subsidy, licensing, inspection and control can ensure that all daycares, both profit and non-profit, can deliver a quality service for children. The problem, in short, is whether a free enterprise or privatized system of delivering a crucial service for children can in fact work, or be made to work by closer and better control.

2. DAYCARE IN CANADA: THE MAJOR ISSUES

Introduction

This review of daycare policy and practice in Alberta will first analyze issues which are crucial for the delivery of quality daycare in the whole of Canadian society. In order to undertake this review we have to sketch the main issues in daycare, if only to dismiss, for example, certain negative views of daycare's effect on children, and negative attitudes on the role of women working outside the home.[1]

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Daycare as a Universal Social Service

This is fundamental issues, not much debated or understood, which lies at the heart of many dilemmas and ambiguities in daycare programming. If daycare is merely a service to marginal families, delivered only under special conditions and after some test of financial means, then access to daycare for "mainstream" parents and their children may become difficult or expensive, forcing them to seek poor quality alternatives.

The Task Force on the Child as Citizen set up by the Canadian Council and Youth for the International Year of the Child (1979) argued that:

> *The customary conditions for a stable family and community environment no longer exist for increasing numbers of young Canadian families. If we accept that successful child-rearing is crucial to the establishment of a stable society, we must be prepared to supplement the efforts of individual families in carrying out this responsibility. To this end, we must reject the concept of daycare as a baby-sitting service for working mothers or, worse, as a remedial service for inadequate parents. Daycare services must be perceived as supports and enrichments to family life in general which offer the young child essential opportunities for socialization. Used to best advantage, daycare would be a universally available early education program funded by health and education authorities. Such a system would provide two-way universal access. Designed with imagination and creativity, it might offer an important system of support to all parents, allowing*

> *them to use its resources to help the early needs of their children. On the other hand, it would provide universal access to young children by health workers, access which could mean regular screening programs and the development of health promotion and fitness programs before school age.*[2]

Although this splendid ideal is far from realization in Canadian society, we should not lose sight of this goal. Daycare should in the last analysis, serve the needs and interests of all children. Those interests are not inevitably subordinated to the needs of adults who wish to enter the external workforce. Fortunately however there is no reason why both goals should not be met simultaneously, provided that an adequate funding base for what we would call "child-centered, supportive daycare" can be found. The kinds of services advocated by the Canadian Council on Children and Youth for example might be delivered in three hours of special programming of daycare each day; this element of the daycare program would be free for any child. But subsidiary to this special programming some children of parents working outside the home would remain in the centre, enjoying the "normal" type of daycare activity.

Daycare's Positive Effects

While it is not part of this review of daycare policy to consider in detail the effects which daycare has on children in the short and in the long run, it is important to consider such effects as a preliminary step in considering policy issues. Briefly put, if it can be shown that quality daycare has positive effects on child

development, then the case for government involvement in both the funding and the quality control of daycare becomes much stronger. Similarly, if it can be shown that poor quality daycare has some adverse outcome for children, the case for government control of the quality of child care will be considerably strengthened.

The evidence we draw on in this respect comes from three sources: reviews of daycare effects by Morrison[3] and Belsky[4] which we commissioned for the journal Canadian Children; and our own research which has followed up a cohort of 679 pre-schoolers in Calgary.[5]

Overall, we can concur with Belsky's submission[6] on behalf of the American Psychological Association to the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee in September 1984 that the research evidence is "compellingly consistent" in showing that quality daycare has no adverse effects on children's development. But conversely, poor quality care can have adverse influences on the social, emotional and cognitive development of children. In essence, quality care has a high ratio of staff to children; small maximum group sizes; at least one trained worker in each group; and conditions of work and supervision which result in dedicated and well-motivated daycare staff.

Daycare; Inter-provincial Issues

An Alberta case study will both highlight national problems, and show unique solutions and problems in the daycare field. The Alberta case has to be fitted into the national picture so that we can judge the strengths and weaknesses of Alberta's policy and practice.

The problems of generalizing about daycare in Canada, without considering individual variations in policy in particular provinces are apparent in the following quotation from the Health and Welfare publication

Status of Day Care in Canada 1984.[7]

> Non-profit, community board operated programs...lend themselves to parental involvement, community participation, and citizens' understanding of the needs of day care. Commercial centres on the other hand increase the availability of services to the middle and upper income groups. (p. 8)

This statement is not entirely accurate in relation to Alberta. First of all, "non-profit" centres in Alberta increase parental involvement in the day-to-day running of these centres in the majority of cases, but certainly not in all non-profit centres. Indeed, some "non-profit" centres have no parental representation on their boards at all, and there is no legal or administrative requirement in Albert for parents to be represented in the running of non-commercial daycares. In fact, only Manitoba and Quebec have any such legal requirements in their daycare regulations. Secondly, in Alberta commercial centres have been set up in recent years in new sub-divisions occupied by lower income groups. Certain community daycare centres in older areas in fact grew out of the initiatives of middle class communities, and such centres are among the few (usually true non-profit centres) in which parents of children are integrally involved.

We have calculated the number of children aged 0-5 in each province, in relation to each daycare space (including approved family dayhomes) officially listed. Alberta has the best ratio, of children to available spaces, with eleven children for each daycare space. This is markedly better than the position in Alberta's neighbouring provinces - Saskatchewan has a ratio of 30 children per space, while British Columbia has 20 children per space. Ontario has 15 children per space.

The pattern of service delivery is unusual in Alberta: 70 percent of daycare spaces are provided by private enterprise, the highest proportion in any province. British Columbia with 58 percent of spaces in commercial spaces has also followed this commercial route, but provides far fewer spaces. The reason for these differences, and the large number of spaces available in Alberta, is due to Alberta's generous system of subsidies for daycare operators. Only in the Province of Alberta are such subsidies available to both profit and non-profit centres.

The Costs of Daycare Compared Between Provinces

The best information on this topic comes from a report from Price Waterhouse, Commissioned by the Government of Alberta in 1982.[8] It is noteworthy that Alberta should have commissioned such a comparison: the motivation was, apparently, to find out how well Alberta was doing, in terms of standards, regulations and funding, in comparison with other provinces.

This comparative review showed that in a number of areas Alberta standards and policy ranked in the top half in comparison with other provinces, and was first in the number of spaces provided in relation to the child population. Another feature of this review was the finding of quite rapid improvement in standards in Alberta, relative to other provinces, in a comparison of the years 1980 to 1982. By 1982 Alberta was the leading province in Alberta in respect of total expenditures on daycare, adjusted by the child population 0 to 5. Alberta lagged behind most other provinces in its training requirements, a position the province still held in 1985, as will emerge in a comparative review of current standards, later in this paper.

In 1982 average monthly daycare fees per place were lowest in New Brunswick at $150.26 (reflecting high subsidy levels for all available spaces), and highest in Ontario, at an average of $356.00 (reflecting an overall lack of general subsidy places). It should be borne in mind that New Brunswick's apparently favourable[1] position has to be qualified by the fact that this province provides far fewer daycare places than most other Canadian provinces. New Brunswick's appearance of generosity is in fact an illusion. In terms of both fee subsidy (general and individual) plus the number of places available in relation to the number of children aged 0 to 5, Alberta emerges as the most generous or successful province.

We have calculated the expenditure per head on daycare for all children aged 0 to 6, in each Canadian province (Table 1). These figures include all kinds of expenditures, including capital and operating allowances, fee subsidies for parents in need, and special programming in daycares for handicapped children. Federal contributions under the Canada Assistance Plan have been excluded.

Alberta's expenditures, expressed on a per capita basis, far exceed those of any other province. This reflects two interlinked factors: first of all, generous operating grants in Alberta (outlined below) are available to all types of daycare both profit and non-profit - this is in contrast to the remainder of the provinces which, when they do provide operating subsidies, restricted these to non-profit centres. Because of the financial support for profit centres in Alberta, many new places were provided and this in turn led to an increase in the number of parents seeking fee subsidy in the Alberta daycare programs.

Comparing the data we have assembled in Table 1 with the figures given in the 1982 Price Waterhouse report[8] indicates per capita expenditure increased 170 percent in Alberta between 1982 and 1984, in comparison with all other provinces, except B.C. and Newfoundland - expenditure increased by an average of 28 percent in this period in the seven provinces. In British Columbia expenditure declined by 27 percent in the period 1982 to 1984. In Newfoundland, expenditure per capita increased from $6 in 1982 to $13 in 1984. This two-fold increase still left Newfoundland with the lowest per capita expenditure on daycare in Canada, a mere nine percent of Alberta's per capita expenditure.

Alberta's expenditure on daycare for the financial year 1984-1985 was $47.2 million (an increase of 22 percent on the previous year). Proposed expenditure for 1985 to 1986 is $55.2 million, an increase of 17 percent. There is little doubt that so long as current policies prevail, Alberta will remain the most generous daycare provider of all Canadian provinces.

Table 1
Per Capita Expenditures on Daycare for Population in Canadian Provinces, 1984

Province	Population 0-5	Total expenditures on daycare (000 omitted) 1983-1984	Expenditures per child 0-5
Alberta	256,998	$38,840	$151
Ontario	754,238	$80,795	$107
Manitoba	98,175	$ 9,284	$ 94
Saskatchewan	105,207	$ 7,860	$ 75
Quebec	536,262	$35,182	$ 66
Prince Edward Island	11,493	$ 671	$ 58
Nova Scotia	74,178	$ 3,580	$ 48
British Columbia	271,773	$12,882	$ 47
New Brunswick	63,021	$ 1,296	$ 20
Newfoundland	54,300	$ 735	$ 13

Sources of data: Population taken from accumulated birth figures 1979 to 1984, published in the Canadian Statistical Review.

Financial data taken from annual reports and special statements from each province, for the financial year ending March 31, 1984.

A Comparison of Alberta's Daycare Regulations With Those of Other Provinces

This comparison is based on a reading and analysis of existing Acts and Regulations from the ten Canadian provinces, in order to determine the extent to which Alberta's regulations are more or less favourable than average.[9] Although Alberta provides more daycare spaces per child population 0 to 5 than any province, and also more generous in its per capita funding in support for daycare than any other province, it could be that in its regulations and standards, Alberta lags behind other Canadian provinces.

The overview of daycare standards on a province-by-province basis reveals that Alberta's standards vary from being the best in some areas to the poorest in others. The Alberta standards for child/staff ratios are the best in the country. British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick are just a fraction behind Alberta.

Alberta's standards for group size are also the best in Canada. Only Manitoba and Ontario have standards equally as good, except in the area of infant care. Group size has been shown to be of critical importance in providing quality care, and allows the staff opportunities to meet the individual needs of children appropriately. It also allows for better child/staff interaction and provides children with opportunities to relate to each other in a meaningful way.

Alberta's child space indoor standard of $3m^2$ per child (including measurement of one-half the bathrooms and hallways) lies within the bottom range near or below the minimum standards of Quebec ($2.75m^2$) and Nova Scotia ($2.75m^2$). The outdoor space requirements of $2m^2$ or $4.5m^2$ depending on age is also at the low end of the range.

Alberta has the lowest standards for staff training. All the other provinces have standards in their regulations which require a certain percentage of staff to have training. Alberta stands alone in requiring no more of its staff than that they be eighteen years of age or older.

Research in the field of daycare has undoubtedly shown that trained staff perform more efficiently in their roles than do untrained staff. But this same research also indicates that level of staff training is by no means the only element in successful daycare programming. The most important element appears to be the combination of small group size, and high ratio of staff to children. It is clear too from the evidence cited earlier that trained staff cannot provide the most successful daycare programming unless they operate within relatively small groups of children, and interact on the basis of a high staff-child ratio.

Finally, in reviewing standards and regulations for daycare across provinces we must note that there may well be a gap between Alberta's generally good standards, and the possibility of enforcing them. We have found, for example, widespread ignorance by daycares in Alberta of

regulations on group size, and a failure of licensing authorities to enforce regulations on group size. Paradoxically, in relation to generally good formal standards, Alberta may have some of the worst enforcement procedures.

However, it is also clear from research carried out for the Federal Task Force on Child Care[10] that there is no systematic information on enforcement of standards in any Canadian province. It is not enough to know what mechanisms for inspection are in place.[11] This Alberta case study demonstrates that detailed research at the front-line of inspection has to be carried out in order to reveal the true picture.

3. ALBERTA: POLICY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT IN DAYCARE

Introduction

In the consideration of Alberta's daycare policy within a national context, it has emerged that in a number of respects Alberta's programs outrank those of other provinces, although some of these high standards are not in fact enforced. But it is true too that such programming is linked to a heavy reliance on the private sector to provide daycare programs. In the present section we review the historical and political context of these policy developments, and spell out in more detail some of the problems of daycare programming in the province.

The Development of Daycare Policy in Alberta

Social service development in Alberta has been marked by a long period of slow growth followed by frantic periods of policy making in which the province catches up with (and sometimes overtakes) the rest of Canada. The growth of a resource-based economy in the 1970s provided the fiscal base for these developments, and in a number of areas such as health care of children, and services for handicapped children, Alberta is a leader in Canada.

Prior to 1967 daycare provision in the province was sparse, and was entirely provided by the private sector. Then, with the passing of the Preventive Social Services (PSS) Act, a number of non-profit centres were established. By 1975 one-third of centres had a non-profit basis, a ratio which remains similar a decade later. In 1976 the Department of Social Services and Community Health (ASSCH) circulated a position paper, "Proposal for Day Care Standards and Licensing" - a reflection of the fact that there were few formal licensing standards, Alberta lagging behind most other provinces in this respect. Some 200 briefs, letters and reports were received in response to the paper on licensing, and the Minister set up a task force in 1977 to consider these responses, and make a coherent proposal for daycare regulations.

Parallel to this, a study was undertaken of the development of daycare centres under the Preventive Social Services Program.[12] By this time 37 PSS daycare centres had been established, serving in the main low income families with special social service needs. In a

number of cases these daycare centres were situated in low income housing centres, and served as a base for a community social worker who worked with mothers of children in the centre. In many cases the daycare was part of a comprehensive program designed to prevent children having to be removed because of serious abuse and neglect. At this time the Preventive Social Services program was an extremely progressive one in Canada,[13] and the Act's successor, the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Act is still unique in all provinces in placing a major emphasis on preventive social services for families and children independently of child welfare or child protection legislation.

As a result of the daycare task force report, Alberta's first daycare regulations were introduced in the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act of 1978. This Act provided for the regulation of a variety of institutions, including daycare, and residential centres for children, youth, adults and old people. A specialized Day Care Unit was established within the Department of Social Services "to ensure a provincial focus, provide consulting services and to continue to review and revise the regulations."[14]

The Report of the Day Care Task Force[15] made a number of important recommendations, including a full scale review of standards and regulations every five years. For the immediate future the task force recommended vigorous efforts to improve the quality of staff training, including a movement towards licensing of daycare staff - an important recommendation which has not yet been instituted, despite the fact that the Minister of Social Services, the Hon. Helen Hunley (now Lieutenant

Governor of the province) accepted all of the task force recommendations. The task force concluded: "Children are our future. How fitting it would be if day care expenditures for children were considered as legitimate investment of some of Alberta's present resource which have been earmarked for providing a heritage for Albertans in the future" (p. 51). This was a challenge accepted by the subsequent Minister of Social Services, the Hon. Bob Bogle, who took office in 1979.

Mr. Bogle, a man in his "thirties with young children of his own and with direct experience of daycare", seemed to have a 'feel' for the needs of the province's growing population.[16] He recognized that rapid economic expansion had brought to Alberta a large number of young adults, just beginning to have young children. Economic expansion also meant that a larger proportion of young married women were entering the workforce than in any other province; moreover, since many of these young families had migrated from distant provinces or from overseas, extended families were often not available as a child care resource. This meant that in the late 1970s there was rapid and unfulfilled demand for daycare spaces. The Edmonton Journal, a newspaper which ascribed to itself the role of "the unofficial opposition" (in a province in which nearly all of the seats in the legislature are held by the Progressive Conservative Party) published in 1979 and 1980 a series of critical articles on the lack of quality care in a number of daycare centres.

Mr. Bogle reacted sensitively to this criticism, and initiated a number of important changes which have laid the foundations of current daycare policy in Alberta.

Besides strengthening the regulations and the potential for their enforcement, Mr. Bogle expanded the role of the Day Care Unit into a new Day Care Branch within the Health Services Division of ASSCH. Parallel to this, the province assumed responsibility for funding, administration and delivery of the Family Subsidy Program, in August 1980. Previously this program had been administered by municipalities and counties, with verying standards and quality of administration. Daycare subsidy or fee support for low-income parents, was now operated by the Income Security Branch, independently of the Day Care Branch whose responsibility was programming, maintenance of standards and licensing, and operating subsidies.

Introduced in 1980, the operating Allowance Payment was available to all licensed daycare centres ('profit' and 'non-profit') which met the new regulations for staff-child ratios, and the floor space requirements for each child. These payments are made for each enrolled child. The standards became mandatory for all centres in August 1982 so no centre could retain its license if it failed to meet these standards. It was originally planned to include requirements for training levels of staff in the 1982 regulations: the plan was to require one trained member of staff by 1982, and then to require one-third of staff to be trained by 1985, and two-thirds to be fully trained by 1987. Unfortunately these proposals were abandoned by the new Minister of Social Services, the Hon. Neil Webber. The reasons for this are not entirely clear - lack of available funds was given as the official reason, but it is difficult to understand why such an important requirement as staff training should be

dropped, when so much funding for other aspects of daycare remains. ASSCH officials have told the writer informally that Dr. Webber, the current Minister, lacks the enthusiasm of his predecessors for daycare and would, if it were politically possible, reduce both standards and parallel funding. His influence in this respect has been felt in the province's failure to enforce the regulations on group size in daycare.

A distinct weakness remains in the failure of the province both to increase the number of licensing officers; in the removal of daycare consultants in at least two of the provinces because, supposedly, of the need to cut back funding in social services six social service regions; and in the failure to give licensing officers a clear set of guidelines for their difficult and demanding role; and in the failure to enforce regulations on maximum group sizes. The consultants occupied a crucially important role in the development of quality daycare, advising operators how to develop good programs and to administer existing resources in ways which met the Alberta daycare regulations. The failure of the province to enforce regulations on group size may well be linked to the removal of the consultant positions, since arranging children in small groups requires organizational and managerial skills which many daycare operators, without formal training, do not have.

The operating allowances which "follow the child" to any daycare centre were increased in 1985 to the following levels:

Age	Staff/Child Ratio Required	Monthly Operating Allowance for Each Child
0 - 18 months	1:3	$257.00
19 - 35 months	1:5	$131.00
3 - 4 years	1:8	$ 78.50
5 years	1:10	$ 65.00

A different kind of payment is available to daycare centres who participate in the "satellite family dayhome" program. This program involves up to three children looked after in an individual's home. The administering centre receives a fee of $84.00 a month for a child aged 0-35, and $52.50 for one aged 3 to 5. The administering centre then becomes responsible for programming, supervision and provision of equipment, and payment to the dayhome worker.

Approximately 30 percent of all parents with children in daycare receive some fee subsidy (the full fee in Calgary averaged about $260.00 in September 1985). The maximum possible fee subsidy is $195.00 a month, but even those parents on maximum subsidy have to pay at least $45.00 a month. These fee remissions are granted after an "income test" - if family income falls below $1,300 a month, some remission of fees is granted, provided of course that the parent applies to the income security office. Many low income parents will not do this however, and there is always a certain stigma in applying to social services. Ironically, over a quarter of parents receiving fee remission are students, so effectively this daycare subsidy is for many an alternative to a student loan.

In May 1985 there were licensed places for 23,673 children in 515 daycare centres, and for 4,118 children in 439 licensed and satellite family dayhomes. A total of 11,705 of the 27,791 children in licensed dayhomes were supported by fee subsidy: this represents 42 percent of all children, and 30 percent of all parents, some parents, of course, having more than one child in daycare. Critics have suggested that the straight income test for subsidy (which pertains in most provinces) is too rigid. An alternative is the means test system (which exists in, for example, British Columbia) - in this system a family with a household income of $1,800 a month would still be eligible for subsidy if they had four or more children. In fact, a Provincial Social Worker can recommend that any family can receive daycare fee subsidy if, in the social worker's opinion, the child's attendance at daycare is likely to ameliorate a significant family problem. But for this to happen, a family has to submit to social work enquiry, and many families may be reluctant to do this.

The value of the operating subsidy can be judged by considering the example of a commercial centre with a capacity for 80 children (10 less than 18 months; 20 aged 19 to 35 months; 25, 36-48 months; and 25 5-years-olds). This centre would receive a monthly cheque from the government of $4,653 in operating grant subsidies. These payments come automatically once a centre has been licensed, and are not subject to direct audit. Periodic licensing inspections (usually every three months) are independent of operating subsidy consideration.

It is clear that the Alberta government, committed to the free enterprise principle in many areas, has extended this philosophy to the provision of daycare (as it has extended the 'privatization' principle to many areas of social service delivery). Clearly, private enterprise daycares are entrusted to fulfil the conditions for the operating subsidy largely on an honour basis. The whole principle of naive trust in the efficiency and goodwill of daycare programmers is, according to a number of observers (including those within the licensing branch itself) a significant weakness in the Alberta system. Alberta is clearly generous in its funding of daycare, and has acceded to the lobby of the independent operators that the raising of standards has to be supported by appropriate financial supports. It is perhaps the essence of the free enterprise position to seek maximum government subsidies, combined with minimum government control or interference in day-to-day operation.

It is ironic to note, however, that funding on services for young children and their families under the province's pioneering Family and Community Support Services Act amounted to only some $15 million in the financial year 1985-86, in comparison with the $55 million spent on daycare.[17]

The Minister responsible for Alberta's present daycare policy, Bob Bogle, has indicated that the daycare and the FCSS programs arose from a common philosophy, to support Alberta's many new families in a constructive and progressive way.[16] If we accept this motivation, then

current imbalances in program funding may be seen as only a temporary problem. These changes have to be considered, too, in the context of changes in the province's Child Welfare Act, and associated work services.

The child welfare system of Alberta had been though a series of crises, and had been the subject of a number of critical reports. Responding to these reports and criticisms, Mr. Bogle initiated major changes, which led to a decentralized system of service delivery, a new Child Welfare Act, and a large increase in spending on Child Welfare Services.[18] In the fiscal year 1981 to 1982 expenditure on child welfare services (concerned with the 'protection' of abused and neglected children, and the servicing of children in group and foster homes, and in residential treatment centres) increased 55 percent over the previous year, to $810 million. Compared with this budget, spending on daycare and on preventive services for children through FCSS is a minute fraction - less than one percent of all expenditures on child welfare. In the years that followed when the province's tax revenues were diminished in a period of recession, and pressure for financial restraint was placed on what were seen by some to be non-essential services. Because of this, it seems, funding for both FCSS and daycare services came under particular pressure. Training requirements for daycare workers were dropped, the positions of daycare consultants were withdrawn in several regions, and regulations for group sizes though still in force, were abandoned. Ironically, the Child Welfare Act which became statute in July 1985 places considerable emphasis on family support to prevent the need to remove children from their families. Yet no special funding has been allocated for this purpose, and

the particularly valuable specialist daycare programs within FCSS show no sign of expanding. In theory at least, greater expenditure on preventive work for children (including quality daycare) should be highly cost effective, preventing the need for very expensive alternative care programs at a later date.[19]

A Survey of Daycare Centres in Calgary and Alberta

The two cities of Calgary and Edmonton contain two-thirds of the province's population, and the same proportion of daycare centres in the province. In the two large urban centres the majority of daycares are run by independent programmers, while the reverse is true in rural areas. Because of a scattered population in rural areas large centres are rarely possible, and if centres are to be independently viable in an economic sense, they have to be large.

We have analyzed and tabulated available data on licensing from the Daycare Branch for 342 daycare centres in Calgary and Edmonton. This survey reveals some interesting profiles. Daycares can be divided into five distinct types. First of all there are 50 traditional non-profit centres, listed as such by the Day Care Branch, and registered under the Societies' Act. Then there are what we have termed "institutional" daycares (38 in number), which are not non-profit in a formal or legal sense, but which serve the child population of a discrete sub-population or institution. Examples of such daycares are those run by the Indian Bands on the Reserves adjacent to the cities, and by the Armed Forces in military housing complexes.

The largest single group in both cities are what we term "small profit", 182 in number. These tend to be long-standing centres which were founded to meet the needs of particular communities, usually one or two people in the community itself with an interest in providing a service for children would respond to community needs, and would set up a centre. Their element of financial profit in this venture would usually be modest, and they would simply generate enough income to cover their opportunity cost - the income forgone in any other occupation available to them. Often these operators are devoted to children in a rather sentimental way, which is reflected in the disneyland or nursery tale names which are given to the centres.

Sometimes these community operators branch out into other communities to form local chains of two, and very occasionally three centres. Most of the 48 daycares in these local chains are in Edmonton. Finally, these are the large commercial chains, particularly the Kindercare Group, which program places (which are not always filled) for the maximum allowed number of children. These 24 large centres, which have been set up mostly in the new sub-divisions of Calgary, standardize programming, have bulk-bought equipment, and standardized, predesigned centres. There are the true profit-run centres, designed to give a return on capital employed which is as good as other forms of financial or industrial investments. In a way, these centres are somewhat vulnerable. Since they have been cast by some in the role of the villains of the daycare world, they are under close scrutiny by members of the community and any kind of misdemeanour or lapse of standard in their programming would bring immediate and

most unwelcome publicity. These large profit centres are vulnerable in another way too. They need to be filled to near their large capacity to be economically viable, and the directors of the chain could, in the fashion of rational capitalism, decide to employ their capital elsewhere if some other outlet became more profitable. The small profit centres, by contrast are usually family businesses and can survive hard times or falling enrollments in a variety of ways. The most obvious of these is to lay off staff when enrollment declines, and it should be borne in mind that the lot of the daycare worker, rarely unionized, is both poorly paid and not often secure. It was not surprising to learn from our fieldwork that in the face of near-minimum wages, lack of a secure working week, and poor working conditions for many staff doing a demanding and crucially important job, staff frequently left for positions outside the daycare field. Such frequent staff changes may well be unsettling for children, and further impairs the quality of care offered in many centres.

An alternative daycare system exists in competition with the licensed centres: this consists of unlicensed family dayhomes who if three children or less are taken do not have to be licensed. Such homes can usually undercut daycare centres in fee terms,[20] but irregularities are suspected by many in this field to exist, including the taking of more than three children but ignoring licensing regulations; and requiring cash payments from parents to avoid paying income tax - but the parents cannot claim the appropriate child care deduction in these circumstances.

Calgary centres are most likely to take children under 18 months, and to operate and to program for maximum capacity (80 plus children). This is in part a reflection of the large chains in Calgary, which also provide space per child which is close to that required by provincial regulation. Many centres, it should be said, are more generous in their space provisions than they are formally required to be.

The non-profit and institutional types are less likely to take children under 19 months, and have more square metres per child than other types; these two types of daycare are more likely to have an ethnic basis (e.g. serving a specific population such as Ukranians or Chinese) and to have a religious origin (e.g. arising from the work of a group of Roman Catholic sisters).

The large chains have capacity for the maximum possible number of children, but it is interesting to note that neither the 'small profit' nor the 'local chains' take, on average, very large numbers of children. Overall, the average daycare in Calgary and Edmonton has capacity for 47 children (far short of the provincial maximum of 80 children), and a density of 3.9 square metres of space per child (significantly greater than the provincially prescribed minimum of 3 square metres per child).

Issues in Daycare Programming

The large numbers of private, unsupervised 'child-minders' or baby-sitters' in a continuous source of worry for those concerned with good childcare. In Britain evidence of neglect and abuse in some of these unsupervised dayhomes led to the enactment of a legal requirement for registration.[21] Problems of unsupervised and unregistered family dayhomes are ignored in Alberta (and elsewhere in Canada)[22]. But probably the majority of children in daycare are in such homes. At worst, half a dozen children will be left in a basement for most of the day, a situation which may lead to behavioural problems and intellectual retardation.

A concern with these problems would be a most appropriate one for cities, and the development of model or demonstration programs in this area has much merit. The Day Care Branch (like the Director of the Child Welfare Branch at the provincial level) has confused and ambiguous responsibilities, and does little to initiate new types of quality programming. On a day-to-day basis, the manager of the regional licensing branch reports to the Regional Director, not to the provincial Director of Day Care. The provincial Director seems to be responsible only for policy development, and aspects of financial control. But the Act which this Director has to interpret is (as a number of critics, have pointed out) vague and poorly drafted. For example, Section 14 of the daycare regulations prescribed by the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act declares that, "A day care facility shall provide a program that in the opinion of the Director of Day Care is...in keeping with the developmental needs of children". But no one, not even the

Director of Day Care, has set out in any public document or statement, what "the developmental needs of children" are optimally meant to be in relation to daycare. Nor has the Director taken any initiative in setting out any particular philosophy of what might constitute optimum care for children. It is left to each individual operator to define this and in some regions licensing officers are now requiring new applicants for an operator's licence to declare an explicit philosophy of practice, and developmental goals for children. This is in accord with Section 6 of the regulations, requiring that, "The operator shall submit a written description of the day care facility' proposed program...". Unfortunately there is no prior guide for the potential operator of what an acceptable program might be; nor is there any requirement for an operator to make such a written statement available to prospective parents.

The situation has some similarities with the situation in Alberta under the old Child Welfare Act. This only vaguely defined the purpose of social work intervention on behalf of children and the grounds on which a child could be 'protected'. Widespread dissatisfaction with this Act led to the drafting of a Bill for community input and discussion, and the passing of a new Act, which became statute on July 1, 1985. This Act has a number of weaknesses and omissions but nevertheless is generally accepted as probably the leading child welfare legislation in Canada, and sets out in precise detail what the purpose of social work practice with children should be, and how the best interests of children should be served.[18]

Bob Bogle, Minister of Social Services until 1983, had established a Day Care Advisory Committee, headed by a paediatrician, with members from both daycare and the community at large. This committee advised the Minister on standards and programming, and in their weekly meetings acted as troubleshooters when problems arose, sometimes travelling to remote parts of the province for this purpose. The Committee's most important task in advising Mr. Bogle was the drafting of a Day Care Bill, which included a more detailed statement of the goals for good daycare, and requirements for training of workers. Unfortunately, the new Minister of Social Services, Neil Webber put this Bill aside, and its fate is unknown. The energy of the Social Services Minister has been devoted to promoting the new Child Welfare Act, and the billion dollar budget associated with it. Compared with this budget, the $50 million expended on daycare by the province hardly seems to merit Ministerial attention.

Problems in the Licensing and Control of Daycare

Licensing officers are appointed under the terms of the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act of 1981. But since this Act applies to the licensing of any residential centre other than a hospital or prison which is supported by government funding, the licensing officers are only able to spend about half of their time in the inspection and renewal of licences for daycares. The province employs 21 licensing officers, nine in the Edmonton Social Service region, eight in the Calgary region, two each in the central and southern regions, and one each in the two northern regions. In Calgary, then,

four licensing officers are responsible for the periodic inspection of over 150 daycares, or one inspector for some 37 centres. Since the withdrawal of the daycare consultants following funding cutbacks, licensing officers have the dual responsibility of advising and programming for children's needs, a task for which some officers are qualified, but other are not. In practice, the licensing officer will visit, usually by appointment, about every three months. Of course, for all but the most disorganized daycare, things will be ship shape and Bristol fashion on the appointed day!

A senior person within the Day Care Branch[23] expressed misgivings about this process to us. Some unscrupulous daycares given some forewarning by licensing officers will hire on a worker for the week surrounding the visit so as to give the appearance of maintaining adequate staff/child ratios. In some private daycares the registered owner may be counted as a member of staff for licensing purposes, but will seldom be in the centre, having a job elsewhere. This will effectively mean a much poorer staff/child ratio than is allowed for in formal regulations. These ratios are probably neglected most often at non-program times, before eight or after four. Another problem occurs when a worker leaves her group to prepare snack and lunch: then numbers have to double up. Sometimes a special needs worker funded through Handicapped Children's Services will be counted with general staff for purposes of meeting staff/child regulations. This practice has been occurring for three years before licensing officers became aware of it; apparently the two branches of government involved did not communicate with one another! Daycares are required to report all accidents; not all do.

Licensing officers heave learned of such abuses not, usually, through direct visits but because workers in the daycare or parents of children have approached them informally, sometimes after hours in their own homes. Complaints of this kind have emerged about both profit and non-profit centres. Not all non-profit centres have parents on their boards, and a dissatisfied parent often has no recourse but to complain to a licensing officer. Unfortunately, licensing officers rarely act decisively in these matters. They complain of overwork and lack of support from senior staff, particularly in any attempts to revoke the licence of a centre which is obviously violating regulations. There is definite feeling in the inspectorate that decisions to close a centre will rarely be supported by the provincial Director or by the Minister; the ethos in which inspectors have to work is one which trusts the centres to put their house in order after a warning. Indeed a simple warning is usually sufficient, but there are cases on record in which a lawyer representing a centre has effectively undermined an inspector's efforts. This can be because the inspectors themselves proceed in a haphazard or rather unprofessional way. There are, to our knowledge, only two examples in which a daycare licence has been permanently revoked.

A major weakness in the Alberta system concerns the failure to enforce regulations on group sizes. The Social Care Facilities Licensing Act (Day Care Regulation) 1981 requires, in Section 34 that after 1982 the maximum number of children in a group shall be 6 for those aged 0-18 months; 10 for those aged 19 to 35 months; 16 for those aged three to four years; and 20 for

those aged 5 years. By 1985 these regulations have been informally abandoned, although they still remain in the statute. The reasons seem to be a combination of the restricted and unsupported role of the licensing officers, and the successful appeal to the Minister by some daycare operators that the enforcement of this regulation would make programming difficult. In the worst daycares (which are fortunately a small minority) children are frequently herded together in groups much larger than those allowed by regulation. The staff in such centres seem to enjoy this, because they can chat to one another, ignoring the small people playing, fighting, crying or sitting alone in corners. In such situations noise levels become catastrophic, and a child may have no interaction with an adult for several hours. Some operators adhere to the regulations on group size on a voluntary basis; most do not. In order for group size regulations to be met, many daycares will need the advice and assistance of a daycare consultant to rearrange the day to avoid large group activities. But there are simply too few consultants (and none at all in Calgary) to enable this to happen.

The following examples show the difficulties in the area of licensing and control. In the first case a daycare was locked, leaving an 18-month-old trapped inside. This mother had asked a friend to collect and care for the boy, but the friend was not able to do this, and when no one collected the child at 6:00 p.m. he was inadvertently locked in the centre. Finally, with the aid of police the centre was opened up at 9:30 p.m., and a scared child was rescued from the dark still in his

crib. This incident raised issues of supervision and safety in the daycare. The provincial inspector's report spoke of "very inadequate care". The licence of this centre was not revoked, however.

The second case was potentially more serious, involving allegations of physical and sexual abuse. The centre's licence was restored after a hearing before the Social Service Appeal Panel, because of the way in which the licensing department had brought the case. Strongly suspecting physical and sexual abuse of several children, but being unable to obtain clinching evidence (because of the age of the children involved) the licence was revoked instead on the formal grounds that there was only one communal towel in a washroom used by children; the operator had failed to post lunch menus; and there was insufficient heat in part of the centre. A lawyer for the centre was successful in having the licence restored, and also in blocking evidence on the alleged abuse, which was not part of the formal complaint. The only positive outcome in this case was that inspectors were satisfied, three months later, that incidents of ear twisting and indiscriminate slapping has ceased.

In another case a well-run daycare was sold, and the new owners appeared to have little idea how to run a daycare. The new owners fired some staff; others left, and staff/child ratios soon deteriorated. Infants were left for long periods without being changed; older children were controlled by spanking. A group of five mothers who removed their children from the centre complained to the licensing department, who waited three weeks before suspending the licence. But the story did

not end there: parents of children who had remained in the centre complained bitterly to the licensing department about the disruption of their childcare arrangements. Appeal by the parents to M.L.A.s the Minister was successful, and due to political pressure on licensing officers the centre was reopened. Licensing officers, now acting as program consultants, spent several weeks in the centre instructing the new owners (who spoke little English or French) in how to run a daycare, and how to abide by the regulations.

The final example of intervention by licensing officers refers to a case of physical child abuse. After regular programming, at around 4:30, children were required to sit still in a large group. A 4-year-old boy would not do so, and the daycare director grasped the boy's upper arm with both hands, twisting one hand clockwise and the other anti-clockwise. The mother arrive five minutes later to find the boy crying hysterically. She took him immediately to a doctor who discovered severe bruising, broken skin and bleeding, and torn ligaments. The ponderous and doubtful procedure of licence withdrawal was set in motion after this incident, with little evidence of ultimate success.

Child abuse is the most spectacular kind of violation of a child's needs in daycare. But child abuse is difficult to define or detect unless it is of the grossest kind. Physical punishment is not in fact prohibited by regulations, which merely suggest (Section 15) that "Staff...shall discuss methods of disciplinary action with the parents of each child...and shall ensure that the discipline used corresponds to that of a kind, firm and judicious parent". But in Alberta a "kind, firm and

judicious parent" may inflict, according to legal decision, spanking which is justified because of the child's behaviour, and does not lead to lasting discolouration of the skin. It is clear from reports of licensing inspectors that many operators do spank children, with parental permission, and do so in front of licensing officers who are powerless to act.

From our interviews with a variety of professionals working in the daycare field in Alberta, it appears that the greatest problem relates to small-scale independent operators who are 'burn-out', are on the verge of bankruptcy, or have lost interest or motivation or interest in daycare programming. Conditions can deteriorate quickly in such a centre, and what appears normal at the licensing officer's visit can deteriorate rapidly in three months. But in addition there are some chronically bad daycare centres which licensing officers are unable or unwilling to close. Such centres may constitute as many as 10 percent of all centres in the province.

The worst case of abuse in a daycare in Alberta came to light by accident, from a survey we conducted with an adult female population, enquiring about incidents of physical and sexual abuse during the informant's childhood.[24] One woman told us that, twenty years earlier, she had been sexually abused by the husband of a daycare proprietor, when she was five. The man would place a gun on the night table beside her bed at nap-time and told her she would die if she told anyone about the sexual assault. This man systematically assaulted all of the older children in the centre. In 1985 this centre still exists, with the same name it had in 1965. The owners have changed.

Observers of daycare in Alberta have pointed to a number of 'soft' types of abuse of daycare regulations - bending of regulations in ways which licensing officers seem unable to prevent. The regulations clearly specify maximum group sizes: but how shall one group be constituted and separated from other groups? There are examples of centres containing 40 infants in one large room. Regulations require a maximum group size of six for children aged 0 to 18 months; so groups of six are sometimes separated within a large room by thin partitions over which an adult can conveniently peer if the adjacent group is left unattended. The overall noise level is chaotically deafening, and conversation of worker with child is hardly possible. Whatever stimulation the infants receive in such situations, it is not of a verbal kind.

Another area of confusion not affected by regulations concerns the introduction of older children (up to age seven) into the daycare after school and at holiday times. There is nothing in the regulations which specifically forbids this, and it is lucrative for operators to take on this extra trade. But the situation of say seven- and three-year-olds interacting is one which may cause developmental problems of an unaddressed kind for both age groups.

There is a parallel kind of inspection of daycares through the Social Care Review Committee, set up by a special Act of 1980. This is a voluntary committee of 12, headed by a Conservative MLA, and charged with inspecting all residential facilities receiving provincial funding. Two members from the committee visit centres, apparently chosen at random, for an unannounced spot-check.

This is a busy committee, and on average every daycare in the province will be visited about once every two years. In fact, urban daycares are, according to the Social Care Committee's annual reports[25] visited more frequently than those in distant, rural areas. In Edmonton in 1984 two-thirds of daycares were visited, while in Calgary virtually every daycare was inspected in 1984. According to the Committee's chairman,[26] a letter is sent to any facility when any problems are observed, and a second visit is possible to check on action taken. Persistent violations may result in a report to the Director of the Day Care Branch. There is no evidence of any daycare actually losing its licence because of a report by this committee, and the philosophical orientation of this committee, like that of senior officers of the Day Care Branch, seems to be dominated by view that the daycare operators need encouragement and support rather than control. Many violations of daycare regulations seem to be approached in sorrow rather than in anger. Although Alberta may seem to have rather good regulations and standards in comparison with other provinces, what is lacking is strong support for the enforcement of those regulations. Enforcement too often taken takes the form of gentle and tolerant persuasion, which is not always successful. Considering the stake - the well-being of children - such a philosophy is hardly acceptable.

At the same time, the province gives generous operating subsidies to all operators, without requiring any audit or assurance that the regulations are being met. Operating grant subsidies and licensing inspection are, extraordinary though it may seem, quite independent of one another. But herein lies, in our opinion, an

important way of enforcing regulations. The Day Care Branch has clearly had difficulty in administering these operating subsidies, and there are several instances of the bureaucratic machine continuing to issue cheques for several thousand dollars months after a centre had closed or reduced its size.

In an effort to control expenditures in this field the government had commissioned an independent audit from Price Waterhouse in 1985. This had led to some changes in accounting and payment procedures. But a major point has been missed: withholding operating grants for violation of provincial regulations is a much more powerful way of ensuring good practice than the three-monthly visit of the licensing officer, or the annual visit of the Social Care Committee.

In order for this to work properly each centre would need to receive a monthly, unannounced visit from a licensing officer. The monthly operating grant cheque would be issued on the basis of her observation that all licensing conditions were being met. Since no centre could operate without this operating subsidy, this would be a powerful stimulus to the continuous maintenance of good practice. Such an innovation would involve the tripling of the number of licensing officers in the province, but these costs of inspection would still remain a very small percentage of the total amount disbursed in operating grant subsidies. As always in daycare administration, the bottom line is that all activity and expenditure must be devoted to a single goal: serving the needs and best interests of children. The small increase in expenditure in employing more licensing officers would be more than justified by the increase in the quality of daycare service to children.

In addition, it is clear that the conditions for regular receipt of operating subsidies should include not only the conditions of staff/child ratio and square metres of space per child. They should also include conformity to the existing regulation of maximum group size, a regulation that is frequently violated under present conditions, but which research has shown to be crucial in the attainment of quality care.[4]

The Social Care Review Committee is legally required to produce an annual report, summarizing findings and recommendations on the various types of centres surveyed. These Reports are tabled in the Legislature and are sometimes the subject of debate or question for the Minister. They are the most public and explicit statements from government on daycare policy that are available.

Our conclusions from studying these Reports, and interviewing the Chairman of the Social Care Review Committee is that it acts as a kind of friendly, moral policeman of daycare centres, a useful stimulus towards better practice. But ultimately this committee has no power and no teeth, and has little resource beyond moral suasion. The Committee's recommendations on registration, training and education have met with little response from the current Minister of Social Services, for example. It should be acknowledged however that the Social Care Review Committee, and the Act which supports it, represent a unique concept in Canada.

The strength, and weakness of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee is illustrated by events which took place in 1984 and 1985. The Committee has identified 13 daycares of exceptionally poor quality, which had failed to show any improvement when revisited. So the Committee used the budget available to it in hiring an external consultant in child development, who worked with these delinquent operators to try and improve the care of children. A number of the operators were requested (but not required) to attend special workshops conducted by the province's own daycare consultants. The licences of all of these extremely poor quality daycares remain intact.

Special reports prepared by the Social Care Committee (which do not form part of the Committee's annual reports) suggest that Alberta may have some of the best as well as some of the worst daycares in Canada. About 10 percent of Alberta's daycares can be said to be of very high quality, and the operators have used the generous subsidies with enthusiastic imagination in providing excellent programs; but some 10 percent of Alberta's daycares offer service of frighteningly poor quality, which must inevitably harm some and perhaps all of the children they contain. The extraordinary tolerance which the government has extended to these centres can only be explained by an overriding commitment to a philosophy of the importance of private enterprise in social service delivery, a philosophy which transcends any principle that the welfare of children is important. When the interests of children and private enterprise conflict, it seems that in Alberta's daycares private enterprise wins the day. Indeed, many would question whether commercial day care operators can both make profit and provide quality care to children.

Ten percent of Alberta's daycares are "excellent", while some 80 percent have been categorized as mediocre to satisfactory. Both profit and non-profit centres fall within this middle group, whose standards are close to those of most daycares in Canada.

Education and Training: A Conflict of Interest Between Profit and Non-Profit Daycare Centres?

Anyone acquainted with the daycare field will be well aware of the division which exists between the 'non-profit' and the 'profit' centres, a division which has an ideological basis leading to vigorous and sometimes bitter debates on matters of policy and programming. We take the view that in a province such as Alberta in which the principle of private enterprise in social service delivery is so firmly entrenched, change has to be worked for slowly and carefully, with some accommodation to existing structures and ideologies, including the principle of private enterprise. We have tried to however approach this debate with an open mind. We have found, for example that quality of daycare operation does not exactly coincide with the type of centre. Some 'non-profit' centres offer rather mediocre programming; and some 'profit' cenres offer programs of high quality. Deteriorating, poor quality centres do seem to occur however exclusively in the independent sector.

It is also apparent, from our analysis of centres in Calgary and Alberta, that the division between profit and non-profit centres is by no means clearcut. A number of centres formally listed as profit centres are in fact institutional centres, representing a community such as an Indian Band. Most profit centres serve a single community, and were founded by local people to meet local community needs. The degree of financial profit is quite marginal.

The issue of education and of workers' training is a key one, and a crucial point on which advocates of non-profit programming disagree with the profit centres. It is claimed that the independent operators do not wish to employ trained workers, since doing so would increase costs, and thereby would also diminish profits. The independent programmers counter that they would be delighted to employ more trained workers if the government would subsidize the costs, in the same way that regulations on staff/child ratio are enforced through subsidization. The previous Minister of Social Services (Bob Bogle) had agreed in principle to subsidize the extra costs of employing college program graduates, but this proposal was dropped by the present Minister (Neil Webber) on the grounds that the extra expense could not be spared at a time of falling taxation revenues.

Should salary subsidization become available for daycare workers, it is clear that there are far too few diploma graduates in relation to potential demand. This means that government would have to fund through its Advanced Education Department, many more places and some additional courses. This is another factor inhibiting government in making educational requirements mandatory for daycare workers.

In addition to Diploma programs, there is another educational route for daycare workers. This involves a certificate in Early Childhood Education and Development (offered by the Community Colleges) and the Certificate in Day Care (offered by the independent daycare association, the Day Care Society of Alberta). Both offer a part-time course over one year, using the student's regular place of employment as the supervised practicum setting. About a third of students in both types of course will withdraw, either because the time and energy demands of two evening semesters on top of a normal working day are too rigorous; or because they are advised to withdraw by instructors, on academic or professional grounds.

Several organizations represent the interests of daycare workers and operators in Alberta, including the Early Childhood Professional Association of Alberta, and the Day Care Society of Alberta. Both have been active in advocating types and standards of training for daycare workers.

The Alberta Association for Young Children (AAYC) has also been active in research and advocacy on daycare issues in the province. The AAYC has expressed particular concern about lack of training standards. In a document issued in September 1984[27] AAYC cited a news release from the Alberta government issued four years before in which the Minister of Social Services announced "the design of a Day Care Advisory Committee" whose initial task "will be to identify qualifications and training requirements for Day Care personnel". But four years later no registry had been established, and training requirements have been dropped from the daycare

regulations. The AAYC document advocates the Manitoba system as a model. In Manitoba, "by October 1988, at least one staff person per group of children shall meet the requirements of a Child Care Worker II or III" and "Day Care Centre directors shall meet the requirements of a C.C.W.III and have at least one year's experience working with children in a day care".[28] In these Manitoba standards, a C.C.W.II is the graduate of an approved one-year certificate program, while a C.C.W.III has a diploma, degree or advanced certification in early childhood development.

Although these appear to be standards which are both sensible and eminently realizeable, they should be considered as only a starting point for minimum requirements for all daycares. While not all daycare workers need to be professionally trained, at least the program's director should have full professional qualification; and any group leader should have at least some professional qualification. The provinces insist that workers such as nurses and teachers who care for young children should be appropriately qualified and registered; why should they not expect the same of daycare workers? Indeed, some observers have compared the conditions, training and relative salaries of daycare workers with those of teachers in the province some forty years earlier.[29]

A useful survey of 151 graduates of the Alberta Community College diploma programs in early childhood development and education was conducted in 1983 by the Early Childhood Professional Association of Alberta. This survey found that only 43 percent of the graduates were working in daycare; of these, some 15 percent said they would leave daycare within six months because of

poor salary or working conditions. The median salary of diploma graduates (including those with several years of previous daycare experience) working in private daycare for several years, was $6.75 an hour (in 1983) and $8.00 an hour for those working in non-profit centres.[30] The median salary of those working as kindergarten aides was $9.35 an hour. In most commercial daycares, however, hourly wage rates, including those for newly qualified workers, were less than $6.00 an hour in 1985. Low salaries, of course, contribute to high turnover of staff, which in turn affects the quality of care given to the children.

Graduates of diploma programs who enter daycare employment face a number of frustrations. First of all, they face along with other workers, a gruelling eight-hour day during which their attention from young children must not wander. They have short vacation periods (in comparison with kindergarten aides and teachers), and they even face temporary, unpaid layoffs when enrollments in the daycare fall. In some centres, if three or more children do not attend on any particular day a worker will be laid off immediately, without pay. Another source of frustration for the diploma graduate entering daycare is that often her employer (in private daycare) will not be qualified, and her new ideas about suitable programming for young children may often be frustrated. Role conflict in such situations is often intense, and can only be resolved by a provincial regulation insisting that every daycare director have advanced training.

A national survey for the federal Task Force on Child Care[31] of 3,200 daycare centres found that wages of daycare workers are low in all provinces. In 1984 the national average for all types of workers, including those who are fully qualified, was $7.29 an hour for a 35-40 hour week. Workers with a high school diploma or less earned some $2 an hour less than the national average:

> *Day care workers are paid less than workers with similar education and training. They earn 30 percent less than the average industrial wage and only 50 percent of the wage of an experienced elementary school teacher. General labourers and workers who care for animals earn 30 percent more than day care workers. With the exception of municipal centres, day care workers receive few employee benefits...Costs associated with wages and benefits can constitute 70 percent to 90 percent of a centre's total budget. As such, day care workers' wages are closely tied to fees, debts and enrollments. The centres paying the most reasonable wage are generally those charging the highest fees. The consequence is that, in the day care system, salaries remain low to allow fees to remain reasonable. Day care workers subsidize parents' fees through their wages* (p. iv).

This quotation sums up the essence of the daycare dilemma. In the present system, in Alberta as the rest of Canada, someone loses in daycare. The pressures to keep costs down in both profit and non-profit centres discourage the general levels of daycare training, and the recruitment of trained workers; but children may

suffer at the hands of untrained or poorly trained workers and in high staff turnover or in centres where there are no trained group supervisors; but if trained workers are employed and paid professional wages, fees inevitably rise unless governments offer an appropriate subsidy; but then parents may be forced to seek unsatisfactory alternatives, with unregistered childminders. Our research in Calgary, following a birth cohort of 750 children born in 1980 has produced case evidence of poor quality in private dayhome care which lends credence to the Toronto evidence gathered by Johnson and Dineen.[22]

Only government intervention can solve this daycare dilemma, and Alberta appears to have established a Canadian lead in this respect with its operating subsidy program for acceptable staff-child ratios in both profit and non-profit centres; but it is regrettable that the province has stepped back from offering similar types of subsidy for the employment of trained daycare staff, and has failed to include conformity to regulations on maximum group sizes in its conditions for receipt of the operating grant subsidy.

It is indeed nothing short of tragic that the province has reneged on its regulations on maximum group sizes. These are clearly written into the regulations, but have never been adequately enforced. The situation has slipped now to the point where group size regulations are no longer enforced anywhere in the province, and many operators who regularly receive large operating subsidies each month are quite ignorant of regulations on group sizes. Licensing officers have abandoned any attempt to enforce group sizes, and their work is in general not supported by the Director of the Day Care Branch. The

Director, in turn seems to be reacting to the wishes of the present Minister of Social Services to leave daycare centres to their own devices, on the mistaken logic that because private enterprise in social service programming is in essence a good thing, then the programs delivered must ipso facto be of good quality. Sometimes they are, but too often they are not.

Alberta could, with a minimum of intervention and effort become Canada's leading province in the delivery of quality daycare - the fiscal and administrative arrangements to enable this are already in place. But at the present time residues of Alberta's dismal past in the provision of services for children remain, and Alberta still has some of the worst daycares in Canada, with no trained staff, with large, unregulated groups of children herded by indifferent, poorly paid workers, and with equipment and buildings which fall far below the quality which could be achieved. The harm which these poor quality centres must inevitably render to many of the children they contain can only be deplored. The research evidence is now well established, showing that a combination of good staff/child ratios, plus trained staff, plus small group sizes, can produce quality daycare serving the needs of all chidren.[32] The government of Alberta and its senior officials concerned with daycare have chosen to ignore this evidence.

The Cavanagh Commission: A Perspective on Daycare

In 1980 Judge Cavanagh of the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench was appointed to examine all aspects of the child welfare and child care systems in Alberta, following reports of maladministration and abuse in certain

centres, and problems in the efficient delivery of child welfare services. The report by Judge Cavanagh and his colleagues[33] is an important landmark in Alberta child welfare history[18] and the many of the report's recommendations have already been absorbed in the drafting of a new Child Welfare Act.

Cavanagh's chapter on daycare in Alberta contains some important recommendations for reform which have not been implemented by the Alberta government. It is worth reviewing the report's chapter on daycare in order to spell out the reasoning which lay behind these recommendations.

The Commissioners visited a number of daycare centres, public, non-profit and private and suggested that:

> *Day care can serve as a place for detection of problems involving children, just as schools do with older children. We heard of instances of responsible private day care operators reporting their suspicions of abuse to the Department of Social Services. In addition, where operators see problems developing, they can and do discuss with and instruct parents on needed skills to deal with the problems. We believe publicly operated day care centres give these services as well. This should be encouraged in both public and private centres* (p. 67).

The Cavanagh Commission takes the view that both profit and non-profit centres can act responsibly with regard to children's needs; however, as they learned from their own inspections, and from the Social Care Facilities Review Committee: "Some programs may be minimally acceptable".

The Commission criticizes the Minister of Social Services for taking away control of daycare from municipalities. This was done, according to Cavanagh, arbitrarily and against the wishes of cities and counties. Edmonton had been operating to the Child Welfare League of America standard for daycare, a standard generally recognized as being the highest in the whole of North America. But the imposition of the new provincial standards actually led to a decline in the quality of daycare standards in Edmonton.

In their survey of daycare the Commissioners found two commercial centres which were offering a marginal, poor quality service. The Commissioners concluded that because "inspections by provincial inspectors seemed to be few and far between and rather cursory...unless the provincial authorities can monitor performance and adherence to standards, the quality of service will surely deteriorate". (p. 71).

We would add that since 1982 when Cavanagh's research was undertaken, there does appear from the research we have conducted (including visits to over 50 daycares in the Calgary region) to have been a deterioration of standards relating in particular to the failure to enforce regulations on group sizes.

Cavanagh recommends that "more reasonable standards be developed in the area of program, as well as physical facilities". He points to the Child Welfare League of America standards as an ideal in this respect. Cavanagh further recommends that these higher standards should be enforced by more frequent and rigorous inspections.

These recommendations were made in October 1983; the Government of Alberta has ignored them. The most charitable explanation is that these proposals were made in one small section in a long report with 34 chapters, each focussing on a different aspect of the Child Welfare system. The government has indeed accepted and put into law many of the Commission's recommendations in the reform of child protection services. Perhaps the proposals on daycare will be accepted in due course.

4. EQUALBERTA HOW CAN DAYCARE BE REFORMED - THE LESSONS

This review has established the importance of daycare in Canadian society. In 1983 over five million women were participating in the labour force outside the home. Fifty-one percent of women with children under the age of six (about 10 percent of all women in the labour force) were working outside the home.[34] Half a million women in Canada are seeking quality daycare for their children, but only a minority are getting it.

We have also shown that quality daycare has excellent outcomes in terms of the social, emotional and cognitive development of children. Conversely, poor quality daycare can have a harmful effect on the development of young children. There are three key conditions

of quality care: a high ratio of workers to children; small group sizes; and professionally trained or accredited staff.[32] Untrained staff with good levels of experience and motivation can achieve quality care, provided that there is a trained supervisor, there is a high ratio of workers to children (as low as 1:3 for infants under 19 months), and group sizes are small (not more than six infants in one group). A trained worker, on the other hand, cannot operate effectively when group sizes are large and she has, in addition to attend to a large number of children simultaneously. Quality care involves an individualized, child development approach which is only possible with both small group sizes for any particular age, and a high ratio of workers to children.

A number of national committees and commissions have called for reform in the way in which the federal government approaches the issue of daycare standards and funding. These proposals have been largely similar, including those of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970), the report of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (1982), and the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment (1984). These various reports have called for a National Day Care Act, ensuring consistent, standards for daycares for which the provinces and the federal government share the costs, in order to ensure "quality, universally accessible though not compulsory care, available to children from birth..."[35].

The role of private enterprise daycares in filling the gap in the provision of daycare places in Canada is a controversial one. Alberta has taken the lead in encouraging private daycare development, as part of its general philosophy of encouraging private enterprise in social service delivery. However, unlike the policy of British Columbia, Alberta's neighbouring province, Alberta has offered generous funding for the operating expenses of daycare centres run for profit, a condition of this grant being that the provincial standards on square metres per child, and staff per child be initially adhered to. This has meant that, almost by default, there are more daycare spaces for the population aged 0 to 5 in Alberta than in any other province. Parallel to this, Alberta's expenditure of $151 per child aged 0 to 5 on daycare services is nearly two and a half times as great as the $61 average for the rest of the Canadian provinces. Because of operating grant subsidies available for every child, regardless of parental income or the type of daycare attended, the average monthly fee for a child attending daycare in Alberta is some $80 less than for a child in Ontario, which has no operating grant subsidies which "follow the child". But both provinces have in addition remission of fees for parents, subject to an income test.

A comparison of Alberta's formal regulations in comparison with those of the other Canadian provinces reveals a varied picture. Alberta's regulations on furnishings and equipment, programming standards, arrangements for emergency care, standards for administration and record-keeping, nutrition and health standards are within the range established by the other provinces, and can be described as moderately good. Alberta has the

most favourable regulations for group size and staff/child ratio of any province in Canada. But Alberta's requirements on square metres of indoor space per child are among Canada's worst. Alberta's failure to require any member of a daycare staff to be formally trained are in contrast to all of the other provinces, which have varying standards but which all require some staff training. It is clear that if standards are to be raised and daycare is to become a quality service available to all, then the federal government will have to be involved both in the setting of standards and in comprehensive cost-sharing for all types of daycare, both profit and non-profit. If we allow private enterprise daycare centres to exist, then it is logical that we should both control their quality, and enhance their programs with subsidies.

The paradox of Alberta's regulations, in requiring the highest standards for group size and staff/child ratio, but having training standards which are the poorest in Canada has to be explained. When Alberta's present daycare policy was planned in 1980 it was expected that training standards would be introduced progressively until within less than a decade they would be as good as any in Canada. The failure to implement this policy is due in part to the lack of enthusiasm of the present Minister of Social Services for subsidies for daycare; and funding problems set in train by the provincial recession following the decline in oil and gas revenues. At the same time Alberta embarked on massive reform in the delivery of child protection services, and Alberta's expenditure on daycare of $50 million per annum (giving the highest per capita of any Canadian province)

is small compared with the billion dollar annual budget of the child welfare system. We would argue that a significant increase in the funding of preventive social service which daycare represents should involve a decrease in funding of "protection" services which in many cases are neither efficient nor necessary.[36]

As we have indicated, provincial inspection regulations in Alberta are weak, a reflection of a private enterprise philosophy in government which assumes that although private centres may receive generous funding, the controls on their operation should be minimal. Our survey of daycare centres, and interviews with daycare personnel at all levels indicates that this philosophy of minimal control and intervention does not work adequately so far as the delivery of services for children are concerned.

At present Alberta is disbursing millions of dollars to daycare centres in subsidies. But the disbursement of this money is largely unaudited. Some daycares use this money responsibly; many do not. The cost of an increase in the number of licensing inspectors would still be a small fraction of the amount given in subsidies, and would have the enormous benefit of ensuring that the subsidies were spent in the best interests of the children they were supposed to serve, and should ensure the movement towards a more universal system of quality care in Alberta.

A consideration of the question of quality daycare raises the issue of the role of private operators in providing services. We found, contrary to our original expectation that some private daycare operators do offer quality programming, and also acted in a responsive way to local community needs. Nevertheless, because of the failure of weaknesses in the licensing inspection system in Alberta, some profit-run centres had deteriorated and were offering a service of very poor quality. Our conclusion is that this problem lies at the door of the provincial government in its failure to exercise proper control of daycare quality. The weakness in inspection stands in odd contrast to Alberta's generosity in providing operating subsidies to all types of daycare. These subsidies create the potential for quality care in independent centres.

Our analysis of daycare in Calgary and Edmonton points to the conclusion that daycares fall into three organizational types: daycares which are traditional "non-profit" centres, including both government centres and those registered under the Society's Act; independent centres, serving the needs of particular communities, ethnic groups or religious organizations; and those run for profit, with an incidental aim of serving the needs of children, subject to any provincial regulations which may be in force - regulations which the centres often try and evade if they interfere with the profit motive.

While some for-profit daycare centres do act responsibly and provide quality care, the manifest abuses by a significant minority of profit centres lead us to the unavoidable conclusion that legislation should be introduced which subsidizes quality daycare, fosters and

allows community initiative in setting up new daycares, but makes unlawful the taking of profit from the daycare needs of parents and children. Ultimately, such profit-making is exploitive and usurious in nature, and is unacceptable in a civilized society.[37]

In reaching such a conclusion we are acutely aware of the dilemma that such a proposal may well be politically unacceptable in a conservative province such as Alberta, where the government is moving increasingly to a policy of privitization in social service delivery.

In daycare, Alberta's laissez faire policy for private centres, giving generous operating subsidies with a minimum of control has nevertheless failed to ensure that all, or even a majority of centres offer quality programming. This Alberta case study has demonstrated both the strengths of a largely privatized system (many more daycare spaces per child population than in most other provinces) and its weaknesses (failure to set or enforce adequate standards of programming).

We have been impressed by the degree to which the interest and initiative of an individual Minister of Social Services in 1980 resulted in "a great leap forward" in daycare programming (albeit at the expense of some city-based programs). A deterioration in some of Alberta's daycare centres has however resulted from the apathy or hostility of a new Minister of Social Services who failed to support the licensing and inspection for daycares, and shelved a new Day Care Bill drafted under the previous Minister. Reduction in personnel in daycare support and inspection has been justified on grounds of

economy. But we suspect that this is a ritualized excuse, unrelated to the real availability of funding resources. At the same time that daycare in Alberta has deteriorated, expenditures on other child welfare services have expanded to a staggering figure of over one billion dollars in 1985-86. The failure to implement proposed regulations for training standards by the present Minister is a particularly serious problem, and in our opinion this reflects a lack of political will rather than a reflection of lack of resources.

The operation of daycare in Alberta leads to three important conclusions.

1. The Province of Alberta has been generous in giving subsidies to daycare operators, including those operating on a for-profit basis. While the generosity of a Conservative administration in subsidizing daycare operations should be acknowledged, the negative side of this subsidy must also be identified. The government of Alberta has made no effort whatsoever to audit or call to account the millions of dollars given in subsidies to daycare. This unwillingness to require an accounting of subsidies given to private enterprise extends to many other areas in Alberta, and is a significant weakness of Conservative social policy programming, in Alberta and elsewhere.

2. Apart from a failure to specify staff training levels, Alberta's daycare standards are generally adequate when compared with those of other provinces. But the central weakness of the Alberta system is the failure to insist that important aspects of

these regulations, such as those on maximum group sizes, are adequately enforced. The possibility that the operating grant system could be used as a means to ensure conformity to the daycare regulations has been ignored. The system of inspection by licensing officers in Alberta is not working well, and the licensing officers have not been able to check significant abuses by some daycare operators.

3. The apparent need for cutbacks in social service budgeting has provided a symbolic excuse for failure to increase the numbers of licensing officers and daycare consultants, as well as an excuse not to implement earlier recommendations on standards for staff training. However, we would argue that improving the quality of services for young children should be a primary goal of social policy, and to the extent that such investments prevent the need for expensive social service intervention in later years, the increased expenditures on quality services for young children will be cost-saving in the long run.

A Mother's Experience

We began this paper with a personal account by a mother detailing her search for quality daycare, after her children had experienced situations in one centre which amounted to emotional abuse. Such case histories are not, unfortunately, difficult to come across in Alberta. We conclude this review with another account of a mother's search for good daycare:

> *My child had just turned two when I took her to her first day care. It was a commercial centre in my neighbourhood. I was recently a single mother and had no experience at all with day care. The owner seemed very friendly over the phone. The toys at the centre were old looking and the building was too, but I thought it had a homey atmosphere.*
>
> *During the first week, my daughter was bitten nearly every day. The staff told me about it (although I noticed some they had missed). They had little explanation for this and did not even know who had done it. They assured me it was a common thing. My daughter began to cry even before we arrived at the centre.*
>
> *This continued for over a month. I decided I would look around the neighbourhood for a better place. I found a non-profit centre and was amazed at the number of staff and how much calmer it seemed. The toys were much better and newer. Unfortunately, there was a waiting list and I had to wait another two months. The change in her after a few weeks there, was great to see! She was happy to go, and made friends with some other children.*

I know now that both centres receive the same government funding. I seriously wonder how my tax dollars could be spent in the first centre. The first centre always seemed to have new staff and I wonder how good this is for young children too. I do not think this is right and I worry about what this bad experience has done to my child, and even to the other children, still at the commercial centre.

Footnotes

(1) The literature on daycare in Canada is rather sparce, in comparison with important studies which have emerged from America. For Canadian sources see: M. Krashinsky, Day Care and Public Policy in Ontario. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977;
J. Melichercik, "Child welfare in Ontario", in S. Yelaja Canadian Social Policy. Waterloo: Wildred Laurier University Press, 1978;
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H. Joe, Polemics on Day Care. London: Williams-Wallace, 1981.
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Journal of Child Care, Volume 2, No. 2, 1984 - editorials and articles;
Canadian Children, Volume 9, No. 1 and No. 2, 1984-5 - editorials and articles.

(2) Admittance Restricted: The Child as Citizen in Canada. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Children and Youth, 1978.

(3) F. Morrison, "The psychological consequences of daycare", Canadian Children, 1985, 9, 43-52.

(4) J. Belsky, "Daycare: developmental effects and the problem of quality care", Canadian Children, 1985, 9, 53-74.

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(6) J. Belsky, "Infant daycare and child development", Canadian Children, 1985, 9, 3-5.

(7) Status of Day Care in Canada. Reports issued annually from 1978 to 1985 by National Health and Welfare, Ottawa.

(8) Price-Waterhouse and Associates, Interprovincial Comparisons of Day Care Facilities. Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 1982.

(9) The research in this chapter is based on an M.S.W. Project report, University of Calgary, 1985.

(10) H. Bates, Day Care Standards in Canada. Ottawa: Task Force on Child Care, 1984.

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(12) D. Anderson, "Characteristics of P.S.S. day care users in Alberta", Quarterly Statistical Review, 1975, April 1-6.

(13) L. Bella, "The goal effectiveness of Alberta's preventive social service program", Canadian Public Policy, 1982, Spring, 1-14.

(14) Historical Overview of Day Care in Alberta. Edmonton: Alberta Social Services and Community Health, 1985.

(15) Report of the Day Care Task Force. Edmonton: Alberta Social Services and Community Health, 1977.

(16) Personal interview with Mr. Bob Bogle by C. Bagley, September 1985.

(17) Personal communication from B. Scott, Regional Spokesman for Alberta Social Services and Community Health, Calgary, September 1985.

(18) C. Bagley, "The Cavanagh Commission on Child Welfare", The Advocate, 1984, 9(1), 15-18; and 9(2), 10-14.

(19) C. Bagley, Children in Calgary: The State of Welfare. Calgary: Burns Chair of Child Welfare, 1985; and A Reader on Prevention and Social Policies. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1982.

(20) R. Todres Consultants, The Price of Child Care in Canada: A National Survey. Ottawa: Task Force on Child Care, 1984.

(21) B. Jackson and S. Jackson, Childminder. London: Routledge, 1979.

(22) L. Johnson and J. Dineen, The Kin Trade: The Day Care Crisis in Canada. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1981.

(23) Many of the middle and senior level persons we interviewed in the various regions of ASSCH did not wish to be identified.

(24) C. Bagley and R. Ramsay, "Disrupted childhood and vulnerability to sexual abuse: a retrospective mental health study", Journal of Social Work and Human Sexuality, 1985, in press.

(25) Annual Reports of the Alberta Social Care Facilities Review Committee. Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 1980-1984.

(26) Personal Communication from David Carter, M.L.A. to C. Bagley, September 1985.

(27) Day Care Staff Recommendations. Edmonton: Alberta Association for Young Children, 1984.

(28) Manitoba Regulations 148183. Vol. 112, No. 300, The Manitoba Gazette, Government of Manitoba, Winnipeg, July 13, 1983.

(29) See also M. Chenier and D. LaBarge, Toward Universality: An Historical Overview of the Evaluation of Education, Health Care, Day Care and Maternity Leave. Ottawa: Task Force on Child Care, 1984.

(30) Current Employment Status of Graduates of Early Childhood College Programs of Alberta. Edmonton: Early Childhood Professional Association of Alberta, 1983.

(31) The Bottom Line: Wages and Working Conditions of Workers in the Formal Day Care Market. Ottawa: Task Force on Child Care, 1984.

(32) J. Belsky, "Daycare: developmental effects and the problem of quality care", Canadian Children, 1985, 9, 53-74.

(33) Report of the Board of Review on the Child Welfare System (The Cavanagh Commission). Edmonton: Court of Queen's Bench, 1983; and C. Bagley, "The Cavanagh Commission on Child Welfare", The Advocate, 1984, 9(1), 15-18; and 9(2), 10-14.

(34) Women in Canada: A Statistical Report. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1985.

(35) Report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, (The Abella Report). Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1984.

(36) C. Bagley, Child Welfare and Child Abuse. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

(37) A startling example of naked capitalism at work in profiting from parental needs is given in a series of articles on daycare in Calgary by Rob Walker, Calgary Herald, November 18 to 21, 1985.